8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

woman began to collect buffalo bull tongues to be used in the ceremony. When a sufficient number of tongues were supplied—several parfleches full—the camp announcer called upon all those who had served as medicine women in previous years and the women who had vowed to "come forward to the tongues" to come with their husbands to the lodge of the medicine woman, which was pitched a little inside the great camp circle. There a medicine woman of a previous year who was to instruct the neophyte in the role she was assuming lifted one of the tongues and called upon the sun, professing her steadfast loyalty to her husband. Each woman in the assembly then made a similar confession. Then the sacred tongues were cut up, boiled, and placed in parfleches in the medicine woman's lodge.

Movements in Blackfoot rituals commonly were repeated four times. In the sun dance the entire camp moved four times on as many successive days. On the morning of the first day the medicine woman began to fast. Each day the camp moved she led the way, riding a horse with travois attached, on which were placed the sun dance bundle and the parfleches filled with sacred tongues. On each of the four days her husband and the male instructor wise in the ritual of the sun dance purified themselves in a sweat lodge made from one hundred willows, which were cut, brought in on horseback, and made into a lodge by members of one of the men's societies. Finally, on the fourth day, the people of the tribe arrived at the site selected for the erection of the great medicine lodge.

The major action and the climax of the sun dance occurred on the fifth day. It was on that day that the medicine lodge was built. Its most sacred architectural feature was the center pole, a tall tree trunk of cottonwood, forked near the top. A man famed as a scout for war parties was sent to select the center pole. When he found a suitable tree he returned to camp and reported his discovery. Then he led a party of seasoned warriors to the tree. A man who had killed an enemy chopped the tree down and, as it began to fall, shot at the trunk with his gun. As soon as the tree hit the ground all the warriors charged it. Each broke off

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

on the way home and that none of their horse's feet would be harmed by rocks. He gave it to one of the sick men and told him to take it to a stream on leaving the house, pray to it, and throw it into deep water. Then the tongue soup was distributed to all those present. Having consumed it, they went home.

In many respects the horse dance may be regarded as a typical Blackfoot ceremony. Wissler (1912 a, pp. 248–271) has pointed out that singing, drumming, dancing with sacred paraphernalia, praying, the passing of the pipe, face painting, the recognition of taboos, and the following of strictly formalized and prolonged ritual patterns were common characteristics of Blackfoot bundle ceremonies. Even the employment of dry-painted altars appeared in other important bundle ceremonies (ibid., pp. 255–257). R. N. Wilson (1909, pp. 16–20) in his detailed description of the use of a dry-painted altar in the Sun Dance ritual, noted that this altar was destroyed before the medicine woman's party left her lodge. In that painting black symbolized night, and yellow day.[*]

Aside from the horse symbolism characteristic of the horse dance, the most distinctive feature appears to be the repeated and consistent employment of the ritual number 3. To my knowledge this is the only Blackfoot ceremony in which that ritual number occurs. In fact Wissler regarded 4 as the ritual number of all Blackfoot ceremonies, including the horse dance (Wissler, 1912 a, pp. 110, 247). In this detail his account of the ceremony is in error.

USES OF HORSE MEDICINE

The powers of Blackfoot horse medicine men, as explained by informants, were many and varied. Not only were they credited with the ability to control the health and actions of horses but they were thought to have been able to influence the movements of buffalo and to cure and aid the activities of humans.

Horse medicine was most commonly employed in the treatment of sick, injured, wounded, or exhausted horses. Curing of sick horses generally involved the administration of medicine by nose or mouth as a part of the ritual. Owners of valuable horses generally entrusted their treatment to experienced horse medicine men when these animals were ill. The medicine men were paid for their services.

Three Calf recalled that Wolf Calf frequently was called upon to doctor horses that were staggering and near death. Wolf Calf rubbed his medicine on the horse's nose, back, and kidneys, then shook its tail four (three?) times. If the horse made no move Wolf Calf told the owner there was no hope for it. If it moved it would get well.

[*] Wissler (1912 a, p. 267), has pointed out the occurrence of dry painting among the Dakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho of the Plains, as well as among the Southwestern tribes.

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LUPINES

Lupinus spp.

Lupines (Fig. 21) called "wolf turnips" by the Blackfoot, were used as incense in the Ghost Dance. (This was not the rivivalist movement dance of recent times.) The ceremonialist who was sponsoring it chewed the leaves of a lupine before he undertook any face painting. He did so to reinforce his powers.

YELLOW ANGELICA

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Angelica dawsonii S. Wats

This is probably the most interesting of all the plants of religious use. The root, a religious power medicine, was called ssu-gas-sim, it was also used medicinally. There are three ways in which Angelica (Fig. 22) was [777] used: for luck in games of chance, for individual power by ceremonialists and diviners, and for collective power in designated societies. The [782] harvesting of the root was the same in all cases: those responsible for [285] gathering it would first pray; the root was dug while more prayers were sung; and the newly dug roots were tied to a circular piece of rawhide by means of a thong, which was laced through holes along the rim. The roots were kept there until needed.

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For luck, the root was used in horse-racing and in the hand game. In the horse race, the root was tied in a small bundle and attached to the base of the tail or to the bridle. No other horse could pass the one carrying ssu-gas-sim. In a variation of this casting of a spell so that other horses could not pass, the root was held in the rider's mouth. Short pieces were broken from the stem of man sage (Artemisia ludoviciana) and a small, flat, white stone was collected. The man first sprayed the rock with juice from his mouth. Then the stems were placed on the ground; they represented the [801] other horses. The stone was sprayed again and shoved toward the stems, without touching them, three times. At the fourth shove the stone was pressed onto the stems.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 43]

778 more, though we didn't have it long before our son, Frank,
425 asked for it. We transferred it to him and his wife, but I stayed
with them as the one to take care of the tripod, which is a
● 801 sacred duty. Counting this last duty, I actually belonged with
that medicine pipe four times, which is a sacred number in
our customs. It is based on the four worldly directions and
the number of seasons in a year.

778 Not long after our son had this pipe it was transferred to
our grandson, Frederick Weasel Head, and just lately it was
transferred to another of our sons, Moses. While some other
medicine pipes of the Bloods have been sold to museums, this
778 one is still around. When people are sick or they are in need
755 of help they can call on it for strength and they can pledge to
dance with it, the next time it is opened. They have to make
[425] payments of property to do that, and if they are able to make a
lot of payments then they can just have the bundle transferred
to them, so they can look after it for a time.

515 In the past there were several men's societies with different
178 names, but together they were called the All-Friends Society.
The only ones still going, of these, are the Horns and the
Brave Dogs. These societies used to be the policemen of the
tribe. They enforced the tribal laws and the chiefs' orders. The
Brave Dogs have just recently been revived, and the Horns
almost died out a few years ago. A younger group came along
to take the memberships over, just in time. Now that younger
group depends on my husband, Mokakin, to teach them what
to do. He is now their grandfather.

515 The Horns are the secret society for the men, and the Moto-
[778] kiks are the secret society for women. I belonged to this
[292] society for many years. I had one of the leading memberships,
to which belonged a bundle with what we call a snake head-
dress, which I only took out and wore for certain sacred
ceremonies. In recent years a younger group of women has
taken over this society. Like Mokakin with the Horns, I serve

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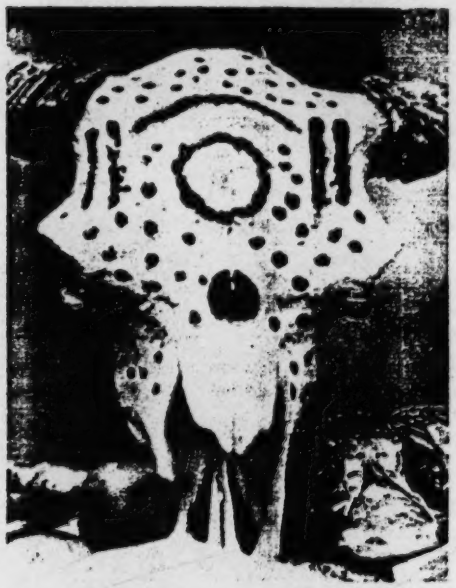

Buffalo skull painted for the Medicine Lodge ceremony, on display at the Glenbow Museum. Symbols represented include: Sun in the center; pairs of Sun Dogs on each side; crescent Moon above; Morning Star below; and hail stones, or Thunder, all around.

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blankets, and quilts were draped in such a way that the inside became absolutely dark and fairly airtight. A buffalo skull, representing the Power and Spirit of the traditional food source, was painted with ceremonial colors and laid on top of each lodge facing the east.

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As the sweat lodges neared completion, fires were started to heat the rocks—one hundred rocks for the fires in each lodge. One hundred is a sacred number during the Medicine Lodge ceremony because it is many, like the People of the tribe.

[801]

[p. 24B]

Bundles lost or sold, the painted designs on our tipis are the same ones our oldest living People saw when they lived in the circle camps as children. 532 342 [778]

In the days when the first white men came to visit our People, tipis were made of buffalo hides and designs were painted with natural colors, usually various shades of our Mother Earth. From her comes the sacred red paint we apply to our faces, bodies, and holy objects, as well as our tipis. The red paint represents our Earth Mother, the blood within our bodies, and also the color of our Father, Sun, in the morning and evening. [178] [822] [776] [778]

There are many types and shades of red earth, but only two kinds are used for sacred purposes. One is *Nitsisahni*, or "real paint," which is fairly bright red and the most commonly used shade. The other red paint is called the "seventh paint," because it is most often used in Medicine Pipe ceremonies where the number seven is sacred. Darker than real paint, it contains a substance that gives it a greasy feel and a shiny appearance. The Old People say that if sacred paint is not gathered properly with many prayers and good thoughts, it will turn into plain dirt before it can be used. 386 778 [801]●

Other sacred paint colors include black, usually made from powdered charcoal; yellow, made [237] [824]

[p. 67-B]

summer's encampment. Four is a sacred number, so it was good to see that many of one tipi design. As all four owners happened to belong to the same part of the camp circle, all the Otter Tipis ended up next to each other.

There are different types of Otter Tipis. All have otters symbolically drawn on their covers. The Yellow Otter Lodge, or Tipi, may have only a small Bundle and a few songs. The Yellow-Otter-Flag has a great many songs and a Bundle that includes the decorated skin of an otter. This skin is known as the flag; it is tied to the end of a pole and suspended over the tipi to wave in the air.

According to our ancient traditions, this is how the very first Otter Tipi came about.

THE OTTER TIPI

Long ago a young man went way up north into a country where our People used to live. He stopped by a lake, perhaps the Great Slave Lake, where he lay down to sleep and seek a vision. No dreams came to him while he slept, so the next day he built himself a raft out of the driftwood littering the lake shore. With a long pole, he pushed the raft away from shore, and then lay down upon it and again fell asleep.

While the young man slept, Wind pushed the raft far out into the lake, where Mink swam up to it. When the young man awoke, Mink said, "I have been sent to bring you to my relative's lodge. Follow me." The young man followed Mink into the water and they swam down to the bottom of the lake. When they reached bottom, the young man saw there a fine lodge, painted yellow with many designs. He heard drumming from within. Mink took him inside and introduced him to his relative, Otter. Otter was lying on a bed of tule reeds (a kind of bulrush or cattail) at the back of his lodge. He offered the young man the seat next to him, saying, "I have heard about you looking for holy Power around this lake. I sent my relative up to get you because

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 70-1]

[p. 68-B]

year began with the trials of winter, and reached its peak with the Sun Dance celebration in mid-summer. 805

The two seasons were further divided into moons, seven moons to each season. That is why the number seven is sacred in our ceremonies. The names for each of the moons varied, and sometimes the same name did not always mean the same moon to two different groups of People. Nevertheless, here is a list of the months as they are written on calendars and the corresponding names used by our Old People. [901]

OCTOBER—When Winter Starts; First Big Storm; When Leaves Fall Off.

NOVEMBER—When Winter Starts; When Geese Fly South; When Big Winds Blow.

DECEMBER—When Rivers Freeze; When Big Storm Comes and Is Followed by Quiet; and, more recently, Big Holy Day Moon, for Christmas.

JANUARY—When the Heavy Snows Fall; Helping To Eat (because the cold used to keep the People from hunting and forced them to share their food supplies); and, more recently, Kissing Holy Day Moon, for the white man's New Year's Day.

FEBRUARY—Eagle Moon; Unpredictable Moon; More Big Storms; Big Chinook; and Short Moon, because the moon only stays dark two nights.

MARCH—Geese Coming Back; Time for Sore Eyes (from snowblindness).

APRIL—Ice Breaking Up; Long-Time Rain.

MAY—Leaves Coming Out; Last Snow Storm (which often brings deep snows and used to cause a lot of buffalo to fall off the snow-covered cutbanks and die).

JUNE—Green Grass; Time of High Waters; Frog Moon.

JULY—Flower Moon; Thunder Moon.

AUGUST—Berry Moon; Moon of the Medicine Lodge.

[p. 195-A]

[Nighttime Ceremony, Ca. 1972]

to remind us of the Powers of Earth and all that grows upon it. When the ball was ready, he turned toward me and dropped it into my cupped hands. I rolled the ball between my palms and then brushed it, slowly, twice down each side of my body, while praying to ask that the cleansing Spirits of the sage purify my body and replace any evil in it with the natural goodness of the Earth. When I finished, I passed the sage sacrament to the person at my left, and so it went around the room. More incense was made, and then the young helper was instructed to go out and bring in the offering. He covered himself with his blanket for this sacred duty, and went out to bring in the holy object from its quiet, sacred resting place.

796 788 [782] [783] [782] [292]

The object represents the Spirits who are with us, in our life here on Earth. Fastened to it are symbols that recall to everyone the Powers of the Universe. For instance, the frame of the offering is made of two willow sticks tied together in the shape of a cross; the willows represent trees and bushes, as well as the material from which we build our sweat lodges; and the cross the sticks are tied in stands for the junction of the four sacred directions, which is the place where we stand, each of us, no matter where on this Earth we are. Fastened on top of the cross, the willow stick tied to form a circle speaks for the roundness of our Sun, our Moon, and our Universe, the sacred circle in whose honor we arrange our lodges and our camps. Fastened to the circle are seven black-and-white eagle feathers. Seven is our sacred number, as there are seven moons in each season, and seven stars help us tell time at night and remind us of all the other stars in the nighttime sky; the feathers are black-and-white to remind us of day and night, good and bad, life and death. Bunches of sage are tied to the ends of the arms on the cross because sage is pure and holy in the prairie-life of our Old Ways, and represents the sacredness of all the plants on Earth. Black and red pieces of cloth are tied to the arms of the offering with buckskin thongs; the thongs remind

796 782 778 [924] [823] [772] [237] [801] [824]

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

father, Many-Tail-Feathers, who was a powerful decoyer, had long been urging our chiefs that we use the *piskan* there, and at last they had given in to his plea. He was a great warrior as well as a decoyer. He was married to three sisters; my mother, the eldest one, was his sits-beside-him-wife.

We made camp on the north side of the river, opposite the *piskan* on its south side. On the following morning my father and our chiefs climbed to the top of the sacred butte for a look at the country, and I followed them. We arrived upon its flat top. There, long since, some of our Sun's men had, with many white stones, made a figure very large, of Old Man (a powerful but mischievous god of the Blackfoot tribes). Yes, it was a very large figure of him, his arms and legs outstretched. When we stopped before it my father made a prayer. "*Haiyu*, Old Man!" he chanted. "Pity us, help us to prosper. Our *piskan*, there close below us, help me fill it with buffalo." And as one man the others chanted: "*Haiyu*, Old Man! Help us to prosper! Give to us long and full life."

We then sat down and looked off. In all directions, near and far, the plain was dotted with herds of buffalo and antelope, some grazing, some resting, others going to and from water. Said my father: "Sun is good to us; just see how plentiful are the animals that he created for our use. Let us smoke and pray to him."

Four pipefuls, sacred number, they smoked one after another as they prayed to Him, sang His sacred songs, and then we returned to camp. Many of our people, with their horses, were drawing old logs and tree branches out to repair and heighten the *piskan*. Not a cliff *piskan*, it was at the mouth of a small, short coulee running down from the plain, and the cut bank at its inner side was just high enough to prevent the buffalo jumping back out of it. From the head of the coulee, of course, ran the two ever-diverging lines of rock piles, and just beyond them was the little ridge so necessary for preventing a herd, farther out, from seeing the decoyer and the frighteners hurrying out to take their various places.

Came night, and in our lodge my father and some of his friends smoked and prayed Sun for quick success at the *piskan*. *Ha!* Before the middle of next day our watchers came hurrying down from Old

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

result that he soon choked to death. Also, three summers back, a white rancher living near the reservation, disregarding the warnings of the Planters, sneaked into the gardens, had a good look at them, took one of the tobacco plants, and then at the agency bragged of what he had done. With the result that, upon his homeward way, his horse threw him and he died of a broken neck.

Incidentally, because I have been a member of the Pikuni tribe of the Blackfoot Indian Confederacy for more than fifty years, and because my wife is an active member of the *Mahtokiks*, the womens' secret society of its Blood tribe, we were two summers ago invited to take part in the ceremonial rites of the Tobacco Planters and visit their sacred gardens. We were the only white persons ever given that privilege. It was a vastly interesting experience.

But to return to the visit of my friend, *Ahko Pitsu:* We smoked a fourth pipe—four, the sacred number—and then he said to me: "*Apikuni*, friend, write a letter for me, a letter to my Tobacco Planters friend.'

"Yes. Wait until I put a thin leaf in my writing machine. There. Begin."

Running Rabbit, my very close friend.

I have not forgotten your invitation. I am not well. I have pains in my breast. But daily, nightly I pray Sun to keep me alive, at least to enable me to be with you sacred ones when you have your tobacco-planting ceremonies; for I know that your prayers for me will be favored by the Above Ones, so that I will become well and strong again. Yesterday my son drove me over to a grove on Two Medicine Lodges River. There I sacrificed my otter-fur cap to Sun. I tied it to a tree limb and prayed the powerful one to give me strength to go to you when comes next New-Grass Moon (April).

My wife, my children, my grandchildren are well. We hope that you and your loved ones are also well.

Your friend,
AHKO PITSU

Such is the faith of my friend *Ahko Pitsu* and all the other full-blood members of the three Blackfoot tribes. The missionaries of the various white religious sects have made no least dent in it.

764 evenly spaced. The north and west lines
172 contain 10 stones while the south and east lines contain 12 each.

The double fireplaces are both three feet in diameter and each contains 14 stones. The everyday fireplace is nine feet from the east entrance, while the ceremonial fireplace is six feet in either direction from the west edge of the ring and from the other fireplace.

[127] There is no doubt that this "medicine wheel" was carefully prepared and, when it was visited in 1955, it was overgrown with grass but was reverently treasured by Mr. and Mrs. Plume. Because the tall grass could not be cleared away, it was impossible to properly photograph the entire ring.

Evidence that Steel did not vary the general size of the circle, fireplaces or entrance, was obtained when two informants stated that the first twin fireplace tipi ring constructed by Steel was still in existence in the Standoff area. By checking winter counts, the date of this ring was set at 1885.

When found after considerable searching, this tipi ring was seen to be almost identical with the "medicine wheel," with the exception that it did not have the radiating lines. It had the same diameter, the entranceway was the same size, and there was only slight variation in the size of one fireplace. The only major difference was that the fireplaces appeared to be closer to the east entrance by some 3 feet. There was no doubt that this ring was older than the "medicine wheel" as all stones were deeply imbedded in the soil, some being level with the surface.

There was one point about "medicine wheels" upon which all informants were in unanimous agreement: the radiating lines had no religious or symbolical significance.

● [80] The number "four" is a sacred one among the Blackfoot and often occurs in religious ceremonies and traditional tales. But all agreed that no such symbolism applied here or, if it ever had, all knowledge of it is forgotten. The reply of informant Rides at the Door is typical: "There is no symbolical meaning to the four lines; they just denote his status as a warrior chief."

764 Upon existing evidence, it would appear that the use of Blackfoot "medicine wheels"

123 796 ticipate fully in all the ceremonies, and when the men, one by one, got up to dance—including the Chief, that old rascal—I in my turn danced too. Fish, the blind man, who was wearing a really terrific Indian belt, danced also, but of course he had to be led onto the floor and he could dance only in one fixed place.

During the really formal dances, the women always danced in [801] groups of four—four being a number of some great religious significance among the Blackfoots. I think this derives from the four directions, for I noticed that as the smoking pipe was passed along, the old men all blew the smoke four ways. The pipe was of the [276] large ceremonial variety, with a stone bowl and a stem about thirty inches long so that it was necessary to hold the bowl at arm's length while smoking. The pipe was passed from one man to another down the line from the Chief, and as it approached I asked Jim whether there was any special way in which I was supposed to smoke it. Jim said not to worry but to watch him and do exactly as he did. So I watched Jim very carefully. And when he handed me the pipe I dutifully scratched my crotch, coughed in the face of the man on my left, and took four puffs on the pipe.

The ceremony was adjourned for the feast, and once again there was plenty for all, and once again I lapped up a bowl of Mary's berry soup and looked around, bright eyed and waggy tailed, for more.

123 796 798 After lunch came the big moment: the sacred Beaver Bundle was unwrapped by the Chief. I had expected a great deal, and I was not disappointed. The chanting and ritual which accompanied the unwrapping were spine-tingling, and I found it easy to imagine that I was seated in a Blackfoot lodge of not 1962 but of perhaps a hundred years ago. And the contents of the Beaver Bundle were, to me, breath-taking. There were in the bundle, in addition to the albino crow—the whiteness of which had been reddened somewhat with vermillion earth paint—a large number of the most beautifully cured animal pelts I have ever seen. There were beaver, otter, [281] mink, weasel, ermine, marten, and many others. Each pelt had been fleshed out even to the head and toes, and I had never before fully appreciated the efficacy of the Indian tanning procedure. I do now, for sure.

796 798 535 There were numerous other articles contained in the Beaver Bundle, and each article was in some way employed ceremonially as it was taken from the wrapping. Four women performed a dance structured around the significance of the four buffalo stones. Four women did the Beaver Dance, each holding a beaver pelt to her